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How to **IDENTIFY** and **REPORT** Investment **FRAUD**

Information for Adult
Protective Services Professionals



*Elder financial abuse is the
“crime of the 21st century.”*

*Together we can stop financial abuse
and help seniors stay safe.*

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ILLINOIS DOCUMENTS



JESSE WHITE
SECRETARY OF STATE

Illinois Securities Department
www.avoidthescam.net
800-628-7937



Elder abuse can take many forms. One of the most devastating and costly forms of elder financial abuse — investment fraud — is often perpetrated by trusted financial advisers or even family and friends. Senior consumers

are increasingly targeted by con artists using investment-related pitches, often in what the senior believes is a safe setting like a church, social club, or part of a so-called “free lunch” seminar.

Adult Protective Services Professionals may have the objectivity needed to question whether a “fantastic” opportunity may, in fact, be fraud.

Please call the Illinois Secretary of State Securities Department at 800-628-7937 if you believe a senior in your care may be the victim of financial abuse or exploitation through an investment scam. The Securities Department helps seniors avoid becoming victims by investigating possible violations of securities laws, providing disciplinary and registration status on financial advisers, enforcing laws and standards of professional conduct, and offering investor education programs.

Help seniors spot and stop financial abuse and exploitation by knowing what to look for and who to call for assistance.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jesse White". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'J' and 'W'.

Jesse White
Secretary of State

STEP 1: Put the problem into focus

- 75 percent of the nation's consumer wealth is held by people age 50 and over.
- Financial losses suffered by seniors are higher with investment fraud scams than with other forms of financial abuse.
- Many common investment scams can be quickly discovered and avoided by checking with securities regulators before sending money.
- Only an estimated one out of three investors using a financial adviser has ever checked the background of that person with regulators.
- Investment fraud complaints from the elderly account for nearly one half of all fraud complaints received by state securities regulators.
- As with other forms of elder abuse, officials estimate that only a small percentage of cases of financial abuse and exploitation is reported.
- The decline in mental faculties for some seniors makes them more vulnerable to fraud and may make cases harder to prosecute.
- Seniors are less likely to report fraud because they are embarrassed or fear being seen as unfit to manage their own finances.
- Seniors who are abused or mistreated are three times more likely to die earlier than seniors who are not.



STEP 2: Recognize the red flags

Red flags of potential investment fraud:

- Mail piled up; unpaid bills
- Excitement about winning sweepstakes/lottery
- New companion, adviser or power of attorney making financial decisions
- Fearful, distressed or depressed
- Senior received information or was asked to invest in unregistered or startup companies
- Senior was asked to sign blank paperwork on an investment, or gave an adviser discretionary authority over their account
- Senior has unopened investment account statements, missing account statements, or missing documentation for an investment (salesperson claimed to get paperwork to the senior later)
- Senior is missing checks from the checking account, or made checks for the purchase of an investment directly to the adviser or salesperson
- Senior complains that he or she is unable to get in touch with the adviser or broker and has difficulty remembering the terms of the investment
- Senior has lost money in other scams

COMMON INVESTMENT SCAM SCENARIOS

UNSUITABLE INVESTMENTS — What might be suitable for one investor might not be right for another. Securities professionals must not recommend investments that are inappropriate for a customer's age, risk tolerance and need for access to the money.

PONZI SCHEMES — As the number of initial investors grows and the supply of potential new investors dwindles, the Ponzi bubble bursts, with the vast majority of investors losing all or most of their money.

AFFINITY FRAUD — In affinity fraud, the senior makes an investment because of a recommendation by a "trusted" friend based on similar backgrounds.

UNREGISTERED INVESTMENTS — The senior is sold a stake in a new company or enterprise and is told that the investment "does not need to be registered" with the state or federal government.

UNLICENSED SALESPEOPLE — Those who sell securities or provide investment advice must be appropriately licensed. If not, chances are they aren't qualified to offer investments or advice.

FREE LUNCH/DINNER SEMINARS — Regulators find the majority of these seminars are actually sales pitches.

SENIOR DESIGNATIONS — Individuals may call themselves "senior specialists" to create a false level of comfort among seniors and then get them to invest.

**AVOID ANY SALES PITCH
ACCOMPANIED BY PRESSURE
OR COERCION**

STEP 3: Report it!

It's free, confidential and easy. Call your securities regulator to:

1. Check the licensure and disciplinary background of any firm or individual offering investments for sale.
2. Check to see whether the investment itself is properly registered or exempt from registration.
3. Make a complaint concerning an investment adviser or broker and/or report suspected fraud.
4. Learn more about current investment scams that have been reported in Illinois.
5. Receive investor education resources about wise and safe investing techniques.

Your state securities regulator can help. Contact us today:

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National Adult Protective
Services Association
www.apsnetwork.org



www.nasaa.org

Find regulators for other states and provinces through the North American Securities Administrators Association at
www.nasaa.org/QuickLinks/ContactYourRegulator.cfm.

